

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 AID-05 IO-11 DHA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4560

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 1136

E. O. QQYTWC GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, AR

SUBJECT: MRS. PERON ATTEMPTS TO DEFUSE CRISIS

REF: BUENOS AIRES 1095

1. SUMMARY: MRS. PERON WENT ON NATIONAL RADIO/TV LAST NIGHT TO ANNOUNCE THAT SHE WOULD NEITHER RESIGN NOR SEEK RE-ELECTION. SHE ALSO ONCE AGAIN STATED THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE CALLED THIS YEAR. AT SAME TIME, INTERIOR MINISTER ARES IN YET ANOTHER 180 DECREE FLIP-FLOP ANNOUNCED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION, 48 HOURS AFTER HAVING CLOSED CONGRESS, WAS AGAIN CALLING IT INTO EXTRA-ORDINARY SESSION. BOTH ACTIONS WERE SEEN AS RESPONSE TO HER DETERIORATING POLITICAL POSITION BOTH IN CONGRESS AND WITH HER HERETOFORE STAUNCHEST SUPPORTERS, ORGANIZED LABOR. THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT MRS. PERON WOULD NOT SEEK RE-ELECTION HAS PROBABLY GIVER HER BRIEF RESPITE AS IT WILL FORCE OTHER SECTORS TO RE-EVALUATE THEIR POSITIONS IN LIGHT OF HER ANNOUNCEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PACE OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE ENTIRE COURSE OF FEBRUARY 28 WAS CARRIED ON AT FRENETIC LEVEL. AT MID-DAY LEADERS OF 62 ORGANIZATIONS AND CGT MET TO "DETERMINE THEIR POSITION WITH RESPECT TO THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
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CRISIS FACING THE COUNTRY." WHEN LABOR LEADERS EMERGED FROM

MEETING 4 HOURS LATER, THEY PRODUCED A STATEMENT SUPPORTIVE OF HER OFFICE BUT CALLING FOR HER TO IN EFFECT GET RID OF MOST OF HER CABINET AND HER ENTIRE "ENTOURAGE." IT WAS IMMEDIATELY APPARENT THAT RESULTS OF THE MEETING REPRESENTED SIGNIFICANT SLIPPAGE IN HER LABOR SUPPORT. (SEE SEPTTEL FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.)

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN CONGRESS DEMONSTRATED A SIMILAR DIMINUTION OF SUPPORT FOR MRS. PERON. DURING COURSE OF DAY, BOTH INTERIOR MINISTER ARES AND LABOR MINISTER UNAMUNO ATTEMPTED TO PROP UP HER POSITION BY MAKING REPEATED VISITS TO THE CONGRESS TO NO AVAIL. BY LATE AFTERNOON, ALL REPEAT ALL OF THE BLOC LEADERS IN THE LOWER CHAMBER, INCLUDING THE PERONISTS, HAD SIGNED A PETITION SUPPORTING THE PROPOSITION THAT CONGRESS SHOULD BE CALLED INTO SESSION ON ITS OWN AUTHORITY. THE PETITION ADDED THAT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE AUTO-CONVOKED CONGRESS SHOULD BE HELD ON FEBRUARY 25 AS ITS FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS WOULD EXTEND THE AUTHORITY OF THE CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATING COMMITTEES LOOKING INTO ADMINISTRATION SCANDALS. WHILE NO MENTION WAS MADE IN THE DOCUMENT ITSELF OF ANY ATTEMPT TO EITHER IMPEACH MRS. PERON OR TO DECLARE HER UNFIT, OPPOSITION LEADERS MADE CLEAR THEIR INTERPRETATION OF PETITION AS BEING BOTH AN AFFIRMATION OF CONGRESSIONAL PREREQUISITES AND TACIT ACCEPTANCE BY PERONISTS OF FACT THAT OUSTER MOVE WOULD BE RAISED. FACED WITH THIS FAIT ACCOMPLI, ARES ISSUED STATEMENT CALLING CONGRESS BACK INTO EXTRAORDINARY SESSION FOR THE 25TH, NOTING THAT GOA WOULD PLACE DEFENSE BILL AND MODIFIED ECONOMIC PLAN ON THE DOCKET AS PRIORITY ITEMS.

4. COMMENTS: DESPITE TWO SEVERE REBUFFS DEALT ADMINISTRATION BY TEPID LABOR SUPPORT AND CONGRESSIONAL DEFIANCE, IT IS NEVERTHELESS APPARENT THAT BY REMOVING HERSELF AS FUTURE CANDIDATE MRS. PERON DID GARNER BRIEF BREATHING SPACE FOR HER ADMINISTRATION AND REMOVED WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN FATAL IRRITANT FOR HER PERSONAL PROSPECTS FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE. PARADOXICALLY HER CONTINUED LOSS OF SUPPORT IN THE CONGRESS WHERE YET TWO MORE DEPUTIES DEFECTED TO THE "WORKING GROUP" YESTERDAY, RAISES PROSPECTS SHE MAY BE REMOVED BY CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS AND PROBABLY SEEMS TO LOWER FOR THE MOMENT PRESSURE ON MILITARY TO TAKE DIRECT ACTION TO REMOVE HER.

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